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SUBJECT: PRT/PANSHJIR: FUTURE PLANS OF THE PROVINCE I

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Panjshir Province has progressed in formulating plans for its future. The current Provincial Development Plan (PDP), a synthesis of three processes, represents a prioritization of projects, mostly infrastructure. It does not, however, match these priorities against available resources. Yet it does embody a new, more systematic approach to developing the province. The Governor wields it as a marketing tool to attract resources. The PRT uses it to channel the multitude of individual requests into a Panjshir framework for decision-making. Even in its embryonic state, the PDP is a breakthrough. END SUMMARY.

12. This is the first of a two-part series on the future of Panjshir Province. This message analyzes specific provincial plans. The second part examines general provincial visions.

13. "We have a provincial plan, no insurgents and no poppies." With this overview, the Governor introduced his province March 6 to a visiting UN Undersecretary. Earlier, his "provincial plan" amounted to no more than a pair of sector priorities he had identified himself - namely, education and agriculture. Thanks to the PRT's Commander Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds, which is financing the construction of seven schools in the province, the Governor no longer deems education a top priority. He has warmed to his PDP, in part because he sees its potential to attract NGO interest and outside investment. The Governor is now beginning to use the PDP, along with the Provincial Development Committee (PDC), as a framework for identifying key sectors and projects. Its top three priorities are irrigation canals, micro-hydro power and secondary roads.

Planning the Province's Plans

14. Over the past year, there have been three planning processes in Panjshir, one initiated locally and the other two mandated by the Central Government. The Panjshir administration has managed to blend these various planning processes into one organic document, the PDP.

15. Provincial Development Plan: Panjshir has been holding PDC meetings for over a year. During the October 30 session,

the Governor presented a draft of the Panjshir PDP, laying out a five-year plan for the province. The Department Directors prepared inputs for their sectors. The Office of the Governor then compiled the document into one plan. The PDP is now in final draft form. Its core is a list of priorities, some relating to sectors, others to projects. In no instance, however, are identified priorities matched with available resources.

¶6. District Development Plan (DDP): Late last year, a series of District Development Assemblies (DDA) took place. Representatives from the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) characterized the DDP, as mandated by the Afghan Cabinet, as the twenty-year plan for the province that should inform the PDP. In light of the progress already made by November in the PDP, local government officials and MRRD representatives agreed to present DDPs as the premise for PDP discussion. In this way, Panjshiris vetted and approved the PDP at the district level.

¶7. USAID District Planning Process: In April and May 2006, USAID funded a program to identify priorities at the district level. The subject matter expert (SME) held workshops in each district to identify priority projects. In attendance were members of the Community Development Councils (CDCs), district managers and local elders. A plenary session followed, chaired by the Governor and attended by directors of departments and members of the provincial council. Each of the districts presented their priority projects. The session then prioritized districts by need. Although the funding never materialized, the PDP incorporated the grass-roots work.

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Supporting the Planners

¶8. The PRT has strongly supported the PDC and actively participated in its deliberations. Former Commanding General of CJTF-76, MG Freakley, encouraged the Governor to take seriously the PDP drafting. Military PRT officers use PDC sessions to present an overview of CERP projects, thereby demonstrating the principle of accountability. The PDP can also be a tool to coordinate the activities of donors in the province. The USAID Field Program Officer has created a "wedding registry" out of the PDP. This registry is helpful in identifying the projects of various donors, as well as those of the Afghan government itself.

¶9. The PRT is working to ensure that the PDP is not a paper exercise. The PRT announced at a December PDC meeting that it will no longer accept petitions from individuals or villages for projects. When individuals come to the PRT with projects, the PRT refers them to their PC members or their district administrators. If that project ranks high as a priority, then the appropriate Line Director considers it further. If it is again deemed a priority, the PDC will consider it for inclusion in the PDP. A PC member, in a meeting March 15 with the PRT, lauded the PRT's insistence on a PC role in planning. He added that he supports the draft law in the National Assembly on strengthening the role of PCs by requiring their formal approval of the PDP.

¶10. The PRT emphasizes it is not a parallel government structure and will not prioritize projects, nor become involved in local disputes. The PRT is also working to identify where the provincial administration may need technical assistance to maintain an up-to-date PDP. USAID's subject matter expert (SME), at the Governor's request, helped edit and organize the draft into the pillars of the ANDS. The SME also helped translate the plan into English.

¶11. COMMENT: The PDP represents a blueprint, a breakthrough. When the PRT first opened in November 2005, little existed of planning or funding in Panjshir. Then CERP started a

steady stream of funding. Now the province has reached a juncture where there is both funding and planning. The next step will be to integrate more closely the priorities identified within the PDP/PDC framework and the funding provided by Afghan and international sources. The big challenge will be for the Panjshiris to claim one-hundred-percent ownership of the PDP and make it a living document. END COMMENT.
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